

Greenburgh Human Rights Advisory Committee

Town of Greenburgh, NY



STATEMENT ON MARCH 10 PRESENTATION IN SCARSDALE

BY DR. HARISH MOORJANI

On March 10, in our neighboring Town of Scarsdale, a program designed to inform residents about COVID-19 and discuss protective measures instead became a platform for a racist presentation so offensive to Chinese and Chinese Americans, that it sparked outrage among Scarsdale residents. Mayor Marc Samwick also issued a public apology and a rebuke of this speaker's message.

In his talk, Dr. Harish Moorjani falsely claimed conditions only found in "Chinese culture" could have produced this virus, although distinguished researchers recognize these conditions exist in many other countries. He showed a photo of bats in a market he claimed was in China but was actually in Indonesia. He mocked Chinese for wearing masks in photos taken after he said the threat of the virus had passed, although COVID-19 is not the only reason people wear masks.

Dr. Moorjani then blamed, with no substantiation, millions of Chinese for traveling the world to spread the virus. He called China "deceitful" and contrasted it to America where, he said, "We are a moral people." He denigrated the Chinese government for not warning the world to the dangers of COVID-19, ignoring the fact that our President later engaged in the same behavior.

These untruths, derogatory characterizations and stereotyped biases not only paint a false picture of China and Chinese people, they also fan the flames of hatred that some in our society seize upon to scapegoat one group, blaming them

for our current crises for which others are responsible, and potentially justifying discriminatory behavior and even physical assaults.

The Greenburgh Human Rights Advisory Committee stands with the Westchester-Hudson Valley Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA) – Asian Pacific Advocates who condemned Dr. Moorjani’s false narrative and [said in their statement](#), “During this public health crisis, we need factual information and clear guidance to keep people and their families healthy and safe, not racially prejudiced statements that could divide communities. Scapegoating and complacency are never the answer in the time of a pandemic.”

And we applaud the residents of Scarsdale who subsequently spoke out against Dr. Moorjani’s bigoted presentation and their concern for the damage his talk may have had in their community. We also applaud the Mayor’s statement that aspires to build a “respectful, multicultural environment” rejecting bias toward any group, which should be a fundamental goal for all Westchester municipalities.

The Greenburgh Human Rights Advisory Committee would be proud to join with the Scarsdale Council on Human Relations to help find ways for our neighboring towns to put those principles into practice.

The Greenburgh Human Rights Advisory Committee serves as a resource to help facilitate better understanding among the diverse groups in the Town of Greenburgh. Our goal is to advance and protect human rights by furthering racial, social, ethnic, gender, economic, cultural, environmental and political understanding and justice in the Town of Greenburgh, NY.

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